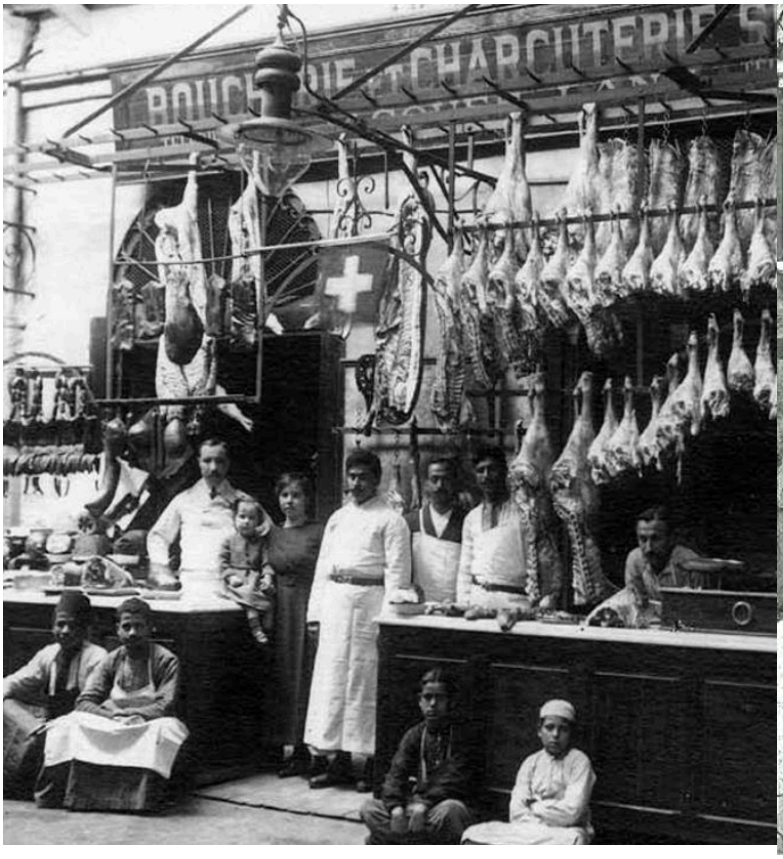
The Egyptians and the Sarsagya, A Study

1- The Origins:
The term *sarsagya* itself did not appear until recently,
but we can trace the origins of their culture, ancestry, and traditions to various minority groups that lived among the Egyptian people.

During the 1800s, Egypt transitioned from being an Ottoman province into a sovereign modern state. Under the reforms of Mohamed Ali Pasha and his descendants, Egypt became a wealthy nation, and some even called it the land of opportunities. This attracted various migrations from across the world, including Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Africans from the Nile, other Arab nations, Turks and Circassians, and gypsies, among others.

In the early 1900s, Egypt was home to various communities, such as the Greek community, which was so large that it funded the Greek government during World War II and even supported the Greek government-in-exile when it was hosted in Cairo. Greeks were among the minorities accepted by the Egyptian people to live among them, and most of their jobs were basic occupations that any ordinary Egyptian would take, such as selling groceries in stores and working in hair salons.



First picture (Swiss Butcher Shop) Second Picture (Greek Hair Salon) early 1900s

Yet not all minorities were accepted. For example, the Gypsy minority's practices, jobs, traditions, and even their way of dressing were completely opposite to Egyptian culture. This made them hated among the population, and all Egyptians refused to let them live in their apartment buildings. In Upper Egypt, an entire family would be shamed if one of them sold land to a Gypsy, due to their practices, which were rejected and despised by Egyptian traditions.

This led the Gypsy minority to live in the desert for tens of years, forming tribes like the *Halab* in the south and the *Ghagar* in the north. In the south, they worked as dancers and thieves in traveling carnivals, which were popular during *Moled* seasons. In the north, they existed only in the red-light districts. They were known as *Ghawazi* and always hid their jobs and identities from the Egyptian people when they left the red-light areas.

Unlike most minorities who became integrated into Egyptian society—so much so that it became difficult to tell they were once non-Egyptians—the Gypsies remained unintegrated. They refused Egyptian culture and traditions and chose to stick to their ways, which were seen as an ugly lifestyle and a sin by the conservative Egyptian population. The Egyptian population, in turn, refused them as well.

Picture (Gypsy Ghawazi early 1900s)

The second minority in the topic of *Sarsagya* origin were the Sub-Saharan Africans. This minority was more accepted by the Egyptian people than the Gypsies. Egyptians had been

familiar with the Nubian people for hundreds of years, as Nubia is considered the "son of Egypt." So, in their eyes, Black Africans were a familiar face, even if they were not related to the Nubians in any way.

These Africans mostly held jobs that were not shamed by Egyptians, unlike the Gypsy *Ghawazi*. However, due to the non-existent economies the Sub-Saharans came from, they did not manage to live a comfortable life in Egypt. For example, the Italians often came with money or at least a craft to set up a shop, whereas the Sub-Saharans arrived with neither money nor a craft, and had to work in low-class jobs, mostly as servants.

Picture (A group of Subsaharan Africans in Egypt) early 1900s

Unlike the Gypsies, who could not live among Egyptians and had to remain outcasts in the desert or in the red-light districts of major cities, the Sub-Saharans lived among Egyptians but in the low-class areas. These areas later turned into slums after tens of years, when the Egyptian government no longer cared about city planning—unlike in the early 1900s.

In 1952 came the coup of the Free Officers, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, overthrowing the government and the democratic system of the constitutional monarchy, and replacing it with a dictatorship.
With it came the death of Egyptian identity, culture, and traditions. Being Egyptian was no longer the standard—it was replaced by being Arab. Egypt was no longer the nation that the Egyptian

government and people had worked to make prosperous; it became part of an "Arab nation" that did not exist.

Egyptians stopped wearing their traditional clothes and stopped practicing the majority of their cultural customs, some of which went back thousands of years. The entire Egyptian history before 1952 was deemed unworthy. Nasser claimed that Egyptians had been slaves for thousands of years and that he came to free them. Meanwhile, they had been masters over everyone around them and had built great empires. But history, culture, and tradition were sacrificed for one man's ego.

With the death of Egyptian identity, Egyptians became more accepting of everyone, and now anyone could be Egyptian. They also became less conservative. Gypsy practices were no longer heavily punished in northern Egypt—though they remained shameful, strange, and foreign. By this point, Egyptians mostly shamed and mocked them, and the Gypsies slowly

entered the population and began living in the low-class areas, which had started turning into slums due to the absence of government that Nasser had replaced.

Meanwhile, in the south of Egypt (Upper Egypt), Nasser's incompetent authority did not extend beyond northern Egypt and the Canal region. The people in southern Egypt were neglected by any government in terms of having their needs met, but they also were not greatly affected by Nasser’s destruction of culture and traditions. The people in Upper Egypt kept their traditional clothing and their old Egyptian customs, which still viewed the practices of the Gypsies as completely intolerable. The Gypsies in southern Egypt remained outcasts in the desert, unlike their kin in the north.

In the north, a habit was formed that would keep growing until it became problematic in the future. Nasser had a deep hatred for the Egyptian elite—not because he was seeking equality, as he and his officers simply replaced the elites—but because he was born a low-class son of a gardener who worked for one of them. Nasser envied them and wanted everything they had. He always felt small compared to them, which created an inferiority complex inside him that he made contagious among the Egyptian population.

He started a trend of shaming anything fancy or beautiful and praising anything related to poverty. This, combined with the death of culture and the denial of the entire Egyptian history, created a gray, cultureless, flavorless urban culture that had nothing to be proud of at all—something that will later be explained as having grown into a major problem in the future.

2 - How Egypt Was Growing Compared to the Neighboring Countries of MENA

Meanwhile, Egypt—once the cradle of civilization—was acting like a newly founded nation that began in 1952, rather than in 4000 BC.
Other nations, by contrast, were searching for history and culture to enrich their identity and add depth to their already existing heritage.

A - The Turkish Model

Anatolia is a nation similar to Egypt—not just in culture, but in the fact that both lands were home to great empires and rich histories. However, how both countries dealt with their history is what truly matters.

When Anatolia was invaded by the Turks and the Ottomans were founded, the Anatolian people embraced the identity of their rulers and became Turks. In modern times, they are proud of Ottoman history—creating movies about it, celebrating it, embracing it, and defending it against anyone who claims it is not their own.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, it was the opposite: their rulers embraced the Egyptian identity, instead of Egyptians embracing the identity of their rulers. Examples include the family of Mohamed Ali, who were equals to the Ottomans; and Saladin, who adopted the eagle from Egyptian temples as his coat of arms. Yet no Egyptian is proud of them—they are often called foreigners and non-Egyptians.

This is laughable, considering that the German queen of Britain is considered British, the Italian emperor of France, Napoleon, is considered French, and the French king of Spain is considered Spanish. Egyptians lacked no valid argument to claim these empires as Egyptian. They simply refused to do so, following Nasser's propaganda that they had been slaves throughout their entire history.

B - The Maghrebi Model

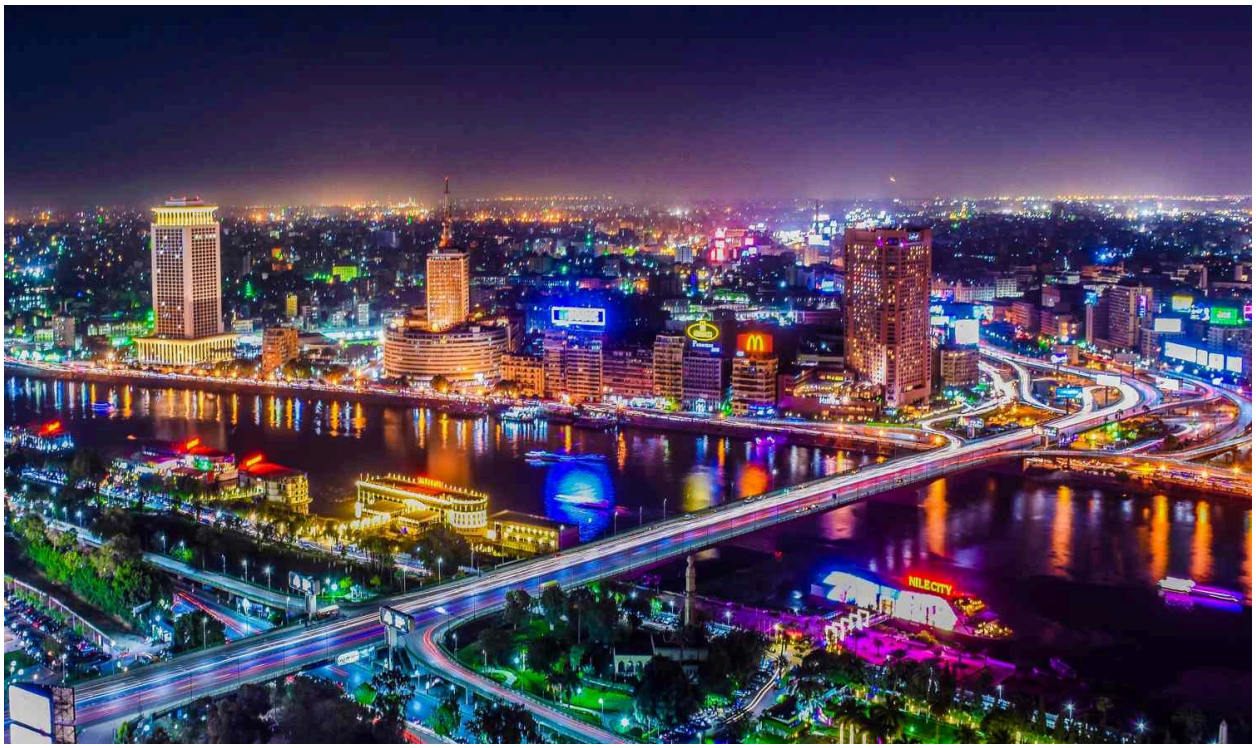
Due to the rivalry between the Maghreb countries of Algeria and Morocco, a fierce nationalist zeal was born inside both of them. Each country tried to outshine the other in every aspect, including culture, history, and identity. This led them to become known worldwide for their rich cultures—even though they do not possess even half the history and culture of Egypt. Yet, they are more proud of their identity than the average Egyptian, who finds nothing to be proud of.

While the Maghrebi proudly showcases his beautiful architecture and boasts about his great history, the Egyptian is seen as cultureless, without identity. Some Egyptians even give their history away to others, not knowing the treasures they inherited—and have thrown away. This created an inferiority complex in the Egyptian that never should have existed, had he simply learned about his own culture.

This complex forced many to claim they were something “plus” Egyptian, as being Egyptian alone felt flavorless. It led people to claim ancestry they did not actually have, just to feel proud of something. You’ll find Egyptians claiming to be half Lebanese, half Turkish, half Moroccan, half Syrian—any nation that has culture. Meanwhile, if they simply searched for the culture they had discarded, they would find something much greater.

But what about the majority of the Egyptian population? When their identity is empty—what will fill it?

3 - The 2000s



The year is 2002, fifty years after the fall of the Egyptian government and the death of Egyptian identity. Slums had begun to form around all major Egyptian cities due to the absence of any city planning. For the first time ever, the word “sarsagy” was used. The word described the thugs who dwelled in the slums.

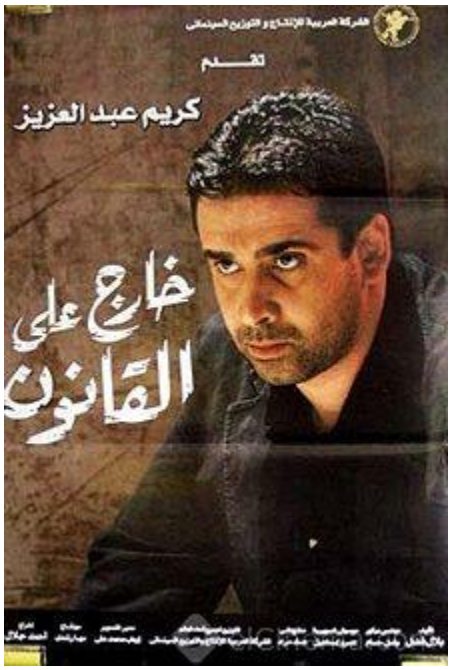
Egyptian people still mocked the practices of those so-called “sarsagya” and made jokes about them. Yet they forgot that these acts were originally foreign to their culture. Now, people began to think that “sarsagy” behavior was not just associated with slum Egyptians, but with “baladi” Egyptians—a word that means local Egyptians, or natives, again showing the inferiority complex

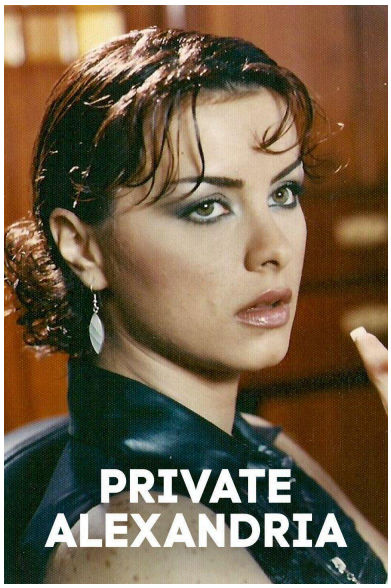
that was forced upon the Egyptians by their gov, making them think anything ugly as local Egyptian and anything good as foreigner.

So by the 2000s, the behaviors Egyptians once rejected as outsider acts were now considered “local” Egyptian practices. Meanwhile, the original Egyptian behavior of shaming such acts was now labeled as “faffy” or “khawaga”—terms implying that someone who criticizes sarsagy acts is trying to act like a foreigner and is shaming his own people.

This is the pure meaning of “the table has turned.”

Egypt, being home to the largest cinema industry in MENA and the Arab world, was both a trait of soft power and a curse. Wealthy Saudis saw Egyptian cinema as a perfect way to fulfill their dreams of producing big movies and meeting stars. However, not many major actors were willing to be part of poorly written films just because a rich man was funding them.



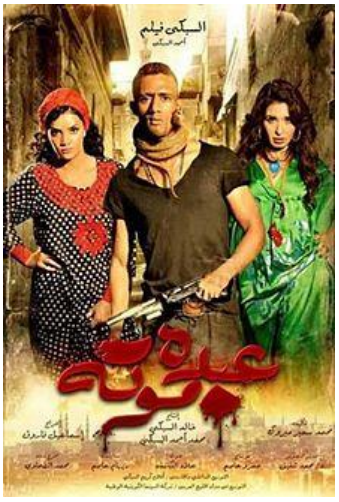


In 2004, Rotana Cinema was founded. The channel initially helped create many successful movies, as at that time, poor writing wasn’t a norm—directors and actors involved were the same ones working on regular Egyptian films. But this changed over time. As stars and the industry began to trust the channel, Rotana started to flood the market with a huge number of poorly written movies and low-talent actors and directors.

In 2010, the first ever recorded sarsagy-promoting movie was made: **“Kalemni Shokran”** (“Call Me, Thanks”), created by a director who was backed by Saudi Rotana Cinema named **Khaled Youssef**. He was essentially a soft-porn director who made erotic films under the disguise of “deep movies that reflect true local Egyptian culture.”

In that movie, actors did not speak in the average Egyptian dialect—they spoke like sarsagya, performing the same ugly behaviors that were once considered foreign and disgraceful. Now, these acts were portrayed as core Egyptian culture and broadcast to the rest of the Arab world as “this is how Egyptians are.”

The movie, of course, took heavy criticism. Then in 2012, the most criticized movie was made: **“Al Almany”** (“The German”), which again reflected the inferiority complex forced on the Egyptian people. The film’s hero was a sarsagy thug. This was followed by **“Abdo Mota”**, another film featuring a sarsagy thug as the protagonist.



At this point, even though the majority of Egyptians were outraged by how they were being portrayed in such a disgusting way, it didn’t matter. The sarsagya identity was now becoming the dominant culture in Egypt—and anyone who disagreed was labeled a **“faffy”**, someone trying to act like a foreigner.

For the first time ever, a violent sarsagy act was recorded outside the slums. A young man, dressed like the protagonist from the movie **"Abdo Mota"**, tried to imitate his thug-like behavior and attacked civilians on the bridge and the streets of Cairo. This showed that, from now on, sarsagy acts were seen as a flex, not a shame.

In the following years, a huge number of similar movies were released, like **“Kalb Al Asad”** (“The Lion’s Heart”), and so on. Meanwhile, the Egyptian cinema industry was destroyed after 2014 when the government bought all the production companies to control the industry and ensure that no movies against the government were made. This led to the cinema industry having only two major players: the government and the Saudis, neither of which represented the average Egyptian in their films. The government films promoted their own propaganda, while the

Saudi films represented how they wanted to see the average Egyptian—as a thug and a clown seeking money.

This led to the demise of the once-moral Egyptian protagonist in films like **“Wahed Men El Nas”** (“One of the People”), which was replaced by immoral thug protagonists. With each movie, the sarsagy culture grew stronger, and the sarsagy lifestyle spread from the slums into the middle-class areas. The Egyptian government, absent and uninterested, did not have any parks for children, nor did it care about creating kids’ television channels. This, combined with the neglected school system, meant that children were raised watching sarsagy-promoting movies every day until they grew into adults.

As a result, middle and even upper-class kids—who were raised in comfortable lives far from the slums—grew up to become sarsagy men and women, where the role model for men was a rapist, thief, and thug, while the role model for women was a dancer, prostitute, and thief.

The once outcasted culture grew stronger, and scenes from the early 1900s of gypsies became core practices for the majority of modern Egyptians. What was once shamed and seen as foreign became the local culture, while what was once considered the local culture was now shamed and deemed foreign. Egyptians, who had lost their identity, found it in the people they once deemed outcasts. As no one can live empty, their identity eventually filled with something—and sadly, it was filled with a wicked, outlander identity.

4- The Sarsagy Traits, and How to Identify a Sarsagy (Modern 2000s Type)

The sarsagy's appearance changes over time, but his psychological traits remain the same. As of 25/4/2025, the sarsagy can be identified by:

- Prefers to wear extremely tight-colored pants or extremely tight shorts.
- Prefers to wear puffed-up jackets.

- Always wears cheap necklaces and “7azazat” (bracelets) on his arms.
- Extremely loud and noisy.
- Always wants to know other people's personal lives.
- Extreme hatred for anything beautiful.
- Considers himself very low when comparing himself to any non-Egyptian nationality.
- Extreme hatred for Egypt and Egyptians, yet extreme love for his street, being extremely protective of its thug reputation (not caring about its good reputation).
- Always mentions his street name during fights, trying to make others think that his street is the most disgusting and degenerate place ever.
- Extremely violent.
- Mostly carries a knife.
- Always shaves the sides of his hair, and most of the time draws lines in his hair.
- Extremely envious and will always try to make other Egyptians fail in whatever they are trying to do, while trying to copy them but always failing.
- Always catcalls and sexually harasses girls.
- In fights, will always try to leave a scar on your face as a sign of victory, according to his strange traditions.
- Mostly looks like a mix of Sub-Saharan African and Gypsy. While looking like a Sub-Saharan African is not enough (as it could just be a normal Black-skinned Egyptian), the Gypsy mix is crucial to identify him as a potential sarsagy.
- Never practices any religious rituals.
- Smells like alcohol and hashish.
- Has no respect for the elderly.
- Does not care whether you are male or female—where the average Egyptian would never touch or fight with a female, the sarsagy will.

- Always listens to **Mahraganat** music.
- Dances randomly in the street for no reason.
- Always tries to act like a clown on social media to attract attention, as he doesn't care about any bad reputation.
- Performs sexual acts in fights, like showing his genitals or fingering the person he's fighting with, according to his strange fighting traditions.
- Even if he can speak good English, he will always prefer to speak in broken English for two reasons: he believes speaking good English is for "fuffy" people, and he thinks speaking like a clown will make people laugh and give him attention.
- Always hangs out at tourist locations to try to hook up or scam tourists.
- Will accept all kinds of insults from tourists and laugh about it, confirming anything they claim without thinking, as he does not care about the country or the people and has no self-dignity. Meanwhile, he will stab an Egyptian for merely looking at him.
- Has a "dance with knife" tradition.
- Makes strange hand signs and performs strange ritual-like dances randomly out of nowhere.
- Can't resist acting like he's stabbing you with his unarmed hands. He will move his hands as though he's stabbing you while holding nothing in his hand, and then walk away.

5- Conclusion and Possible Solution

The simplest conclusion is this: the death of identity led people to search for a new one. Egyptians replaced one of the best and oldest cultures and traditions in human history with one of the ugliest, weirdest, and most degrading, all in the span of 50 years. During a time when non-Egyptians tried to claim Egyptian culture, Egyptians themselves discarded it and gifted it away because of the mental problems of one man. They replaced it with a culture that their fathers had deemed ugly, unworthy, and outcast.

The most similar event in Egypt's long history to the sarsagy outbreak occurred during the Hyksos rule in 1638. The Hyksos were not invaders, but a class born within Egypt (again, Egyptians, in their ignorance of their own history, added a defeat and invasion to their past that never happened). The Hyksos were half-Egyptian nobles on their father's side, and half-Levantine slaves on their mother's side. Over time, they took the throne from the native dynasty, causing a decline in the Egyptian empire. The Egyptians only had a small portion of their formal empire left, but they fought enemies in the south and the Hyksos in the north,

eventually reclaiming their land and ending the Hyksos forever. Egypt could have died in 1638, but the Egyptians fought back and Egypt survived for another thousand years.

Today, we face a similar threat of our country dying forever. If we do nothing, Egypt will fade, and a new state will rise over its place, disconnected from us and our heritage. Our children will suffer for it, God forbid. We could resign ourselves to this fate, or we can fight back and save our country.

The solution is simple: we stretch out our hands and reclaim our culture, our identity, our traditions. We must convince each other that loving our home isn't shameful—that loving our heritage isn't against "اكل العيش" (the pursuit of livelihood).

We must defend one another. We should not allow sarsagya to harass girls in the streets. We must protect our tourists and guests from them. We should intervene in any street fights and shame the disgusting behaviors being forced on us. We need to call these actions what they are—"outlander" traditions, not local ones. We must reclaim our true local culture and traditions.

We should condemn any movie that portrays us as sarsagya or promotes such behavior. We must stop our brothers from listening to Mahraganat music and instead encourage them to pursue other hobbies, so they don't grow up like that. We need to shame Egyptians who act like clowns on social media just to gain the attention of non-Egyptians, and must declar it loudly everywhere, that the avg Egyptian is not a sarsagy.

Finally, we must act with common sense and become the men our fathers and grandfathers were.